

habib koité

After a six-year absence from the recording studio, Malian guitarist Habib Koité and his band Bamada returned with a stunning new album, *Afriki* in 2007. With more than 250,000 albums sold around the globe, an appearance on the popular television show *Late Night with David Letterman*, a duet with Bonnie Raitt on her 2002 album *Silver Lining* and nearly a thousand concerts on some of the world's most prestigious stages under his belt, Habib Koité is one of Africa's most beloved and popular musicians. *Afriki* features an appealing set of songs that reflect Habib's unique and innovative approach to the diverse styles of Malian music.

Devoted fans have waited a long time for Habib to return to the studio to record the follow up to his critically acclaimed 2001 release *Baro*. As with many craftsmen, Habib is a perfectionist, and spends a great deal of time composing and arranging his material. Habib draws on styles from the different regions of Mali, rather than solely on the music of his particular area as most Malian musicians do. Habib has gained a strong fan base by integrating the rock and folk sounds of the Western world, without watering down his cherished Malian roots. Habib descends from a line of griots, traditional troubadours who provide wit, wisdom and entertainment and his charisma and magnetism translates across cultures.

Few African artists have received the sales and media exposure of Habib Koité. Called "Mali's biggest pop star" by *Rolling Stone* (in an infamous article in which Bonnie Raitt compared Habib to Jimi Hendrix and Stevie Ray Vaughn), Habib has also received raves from widely-read publications such as *People*, *Entertainment Weekly* and the *New York Times*. Just this June, Habib graced a 2-page photo spread in the pages of *Vanity Fair* magazine. While sales of African music CDs generally struggle to break the 10,000-unit mark, Habib has defied expectations by selling more than 100,000 copies of his last two studio albums, putting him in the upper echelons of world music artist sales.

"...in his case, the unfamiliarity of the language was no problem, largely because of his communicative manner - kneeling down at the stage edge to interact with the crowd - dancing in unison with his musicians - made such a clear - nonverbal connection with his listeners."

THE LOS ANGELES TIMES

"His reputation as a guitar player has become almost mythical, combining rock and classical techniques with Malian tunings that make the guitar sound like a kora or ngoni."

THE NEW YORK TIMES

"The biggest pop star of the West African nation of Mali."

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